OSTRANDER, McDONNELL & KESEL

# SUICIDE SQUAD™

## ROGUES

NO.21

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WELL, WELL, MRS. WALLER. IT'S ABOUT *TIME* YOU SHOWED UP.

YOU'VE BEEN DRAGGING YOUR BROAD FLAT FEET, AMANDA. THE PRESIDENT TOLD YOU TO HELP SENATOR CRAY GET RE-ELECTED. ONE WOULD THINK YOU DIDN'T *WANT* TO HELP.

WE'VE BEEN BUSY.
*TOO* BUSY. TOMORROW'S ELECTION DAY.

THE ONLY WAY CRAY'S GOING TO GET ELECTED NOW -- IS IF SOMEONE *KILLS* HIS OPPONENT.

THOSE THE PRESIDENT'S ORDERS?
OH NO. HE DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT IT. DOESN'T WANT TO KNOW ABOUT IT.
BUT HERE IT IS IN BLACK AND WHITE, AMANDA. YOU ARE TO FOLLOW MY ORDERS EXACTLY.
OR YOU AND CRAY TELL THE WORLD ABOUT THE SQUAD.
CARE TO READ THE PRESS RELEASE I'VE PREPARED? I'VE GOT IT RIGHT HERE.
YOU'RE GOING TO CALL BELLE REVE FROM HERE AND GIVE THE NECESSARY ORDERS FOR THE ELIMINATION OF CRAY'S RIVAL. I THINK COLONEL FLAG IS RIGHT FOR THE JOB.
AND THEN WE'RE GOING TO SIT IN THIS OFFICE AND WAIT UNTIL WE HEAR THE JOB IS DONE.
UNLESS, OF COURSE, YOU PREFER TO RESIGN.

FOP!

WHAT'S THIS?
OPEN IT UP. YOU'LL RECOGNIZE IT.

OMIGOD...
WHERE DID YOU GET THIS INFORMATION?

DOES IT MATTER? I GOT IT.
YOU KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS, DON'T YOU?

YOU BEEN CHECKMATED.

WHAT DO I TELL CRAY?

CRAY IS YOUR PROBLEM.
BUT IF ME TALKS ABOUT US, IT'S THE SAME AS YOU TALKING ABOUT US. AND THE RESULTS--FOR YOU--WILL BE THE SAME.

MAYBE I SHOULD SAY THE HELL WITH YOU AND GO AHEAD WITH THE PRESS RELEASE.
YOU COULD. IF YOU'RE WILLING TO PAY THE PRICE.
I FIGURE THE PRICE ON THIS IS TWENTY YEARS AND TIME AND YOUR LIFE RUINED.

YOU WILLING TO PAY THAT PRICE... DEREK?

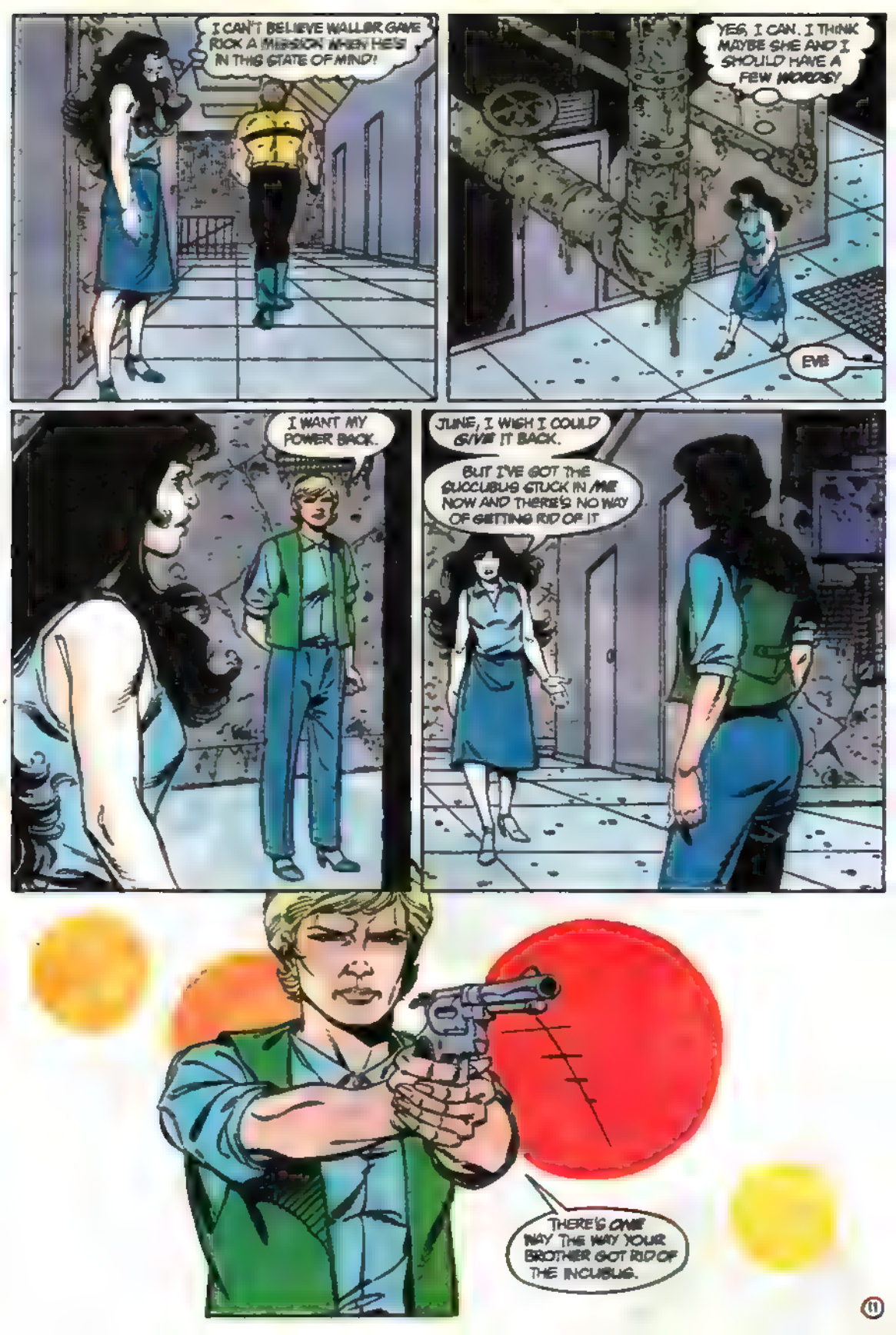
DIDN'T THINK SO.
WHAT IF I KILLED YOU, WALLER?!
TRY IT, DEREK. PLEASE PLEASE TRY IT.
6

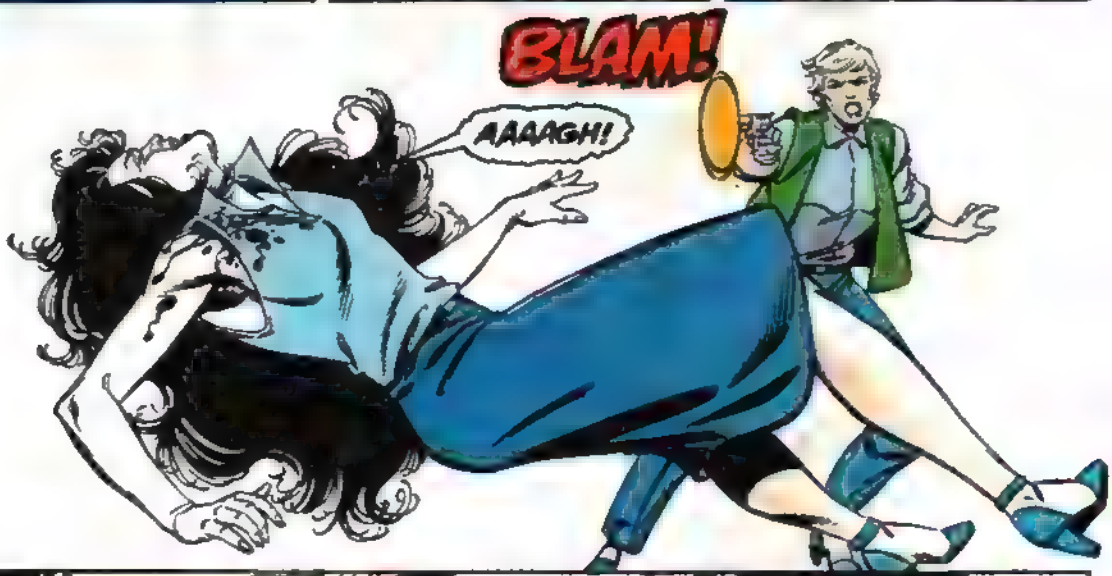
BELLE REVE, LOUISIANA. 12:18 PM CST.
KNOCK KNOCK
COLONEL...RICK? IT'S EVE EDEN. CAN I COME IN?
COME.
LOOK...UH...I'VE BEEN WANTING TO TALK WITH YOU LATELY, BUT THERE HASN'T BEEN MUCH TIME...
TALK ABOUT WHAT?
IT'S JUST THAT...WELL... EVER SINCE DR. GRACE'S DEATH AT THE MANHUNTERS' TEMPLE...YOU'VE BECOME INCREASINGLY WITHDRAWN AND IT BOTHERS ME.
WE HAD MISSION FAILURES BECAUSE I WASN'T STRONG ENOUGH. I'VE JUST BEEN WEEDING OUT MY WEAKNESSES.
MAKING YOURSELF STRONG...LIKE YOUR FATHER?

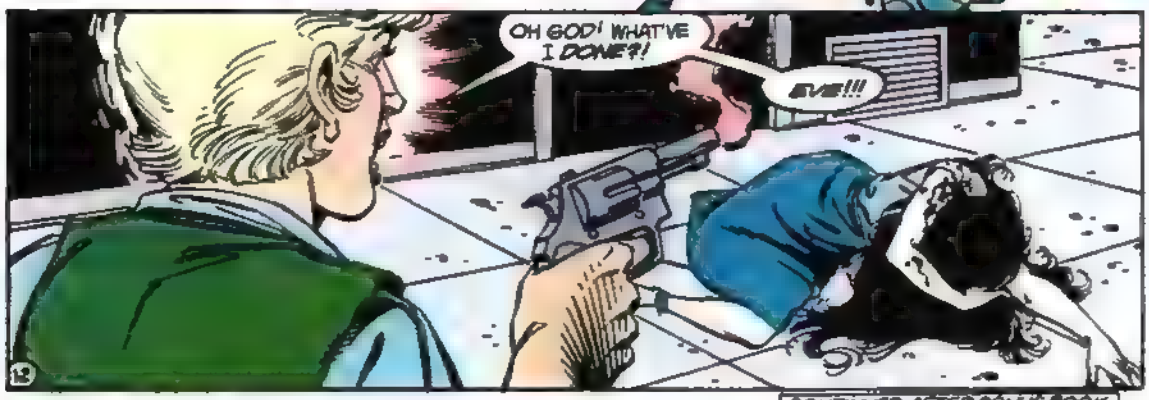
IS THAT WHAT DR. LA GRIEVE TOLD YOU?
LA GRIEVE WOULDN'T TELL ME ANYTHING.
SO I BROKE INTO HIS FILES ONE NIGHT.
I READ YOUR PERSONAL HISTORY. I READ LA GRIEVE'S EVALUATION. HE'S VERY UPSET YOU STOPPED YOUR THERAPY, BY THE WAY. VERY HURT.
YOUR FATHER WAS A STRONG MAN, WASN'T HE? DEMANDING. TOUGH. UNYIELDING.
THE SORT OF MAN YOU'RE TRYING TO MAKE YOURSELF.
BUT HE COULDN'T BEND, SO HE BROKE WHEN YOUR MOTHER DIED. AND KILLED HIMSELF.

MY FATHER GAVE HIS LIFE IN THE SERVICE OF HIS COUNTRY...TRYING TO PROTECT OTHERS!
I READ THE REPORTS OF THAT FINAL MISSION, COLONEL! HE COULD HAVE EJECTED FROM HIS PLANE BEFORE IT HIT THE WAR WHEEL!
THE EVALUATION OF THE REVIEW BOARD WAS THAT HE CHOSE TO SACRIFICE HIS LIFE WHEN HE DID NOT NEED TO!
YOUR FATHER FOUND A RESPECTABLE WAY TO COMMIT SUICIDE!
HE PASSED HIS GUILT OVER SURVIVING ON TO YOU AND NOW YOU'RE WALKING DOWN THE SAME PATH!
IF I AM, WHAT BUSINESS IS IT OF YOURS OR ANYONE ELSE'S?!
BECAUSE YOU ARE OUR MISSION LEADER AND THE ODDS ARE YOU'LL TAKE PEOPLE WITH YOU WHEN YOU GO!
NO: IF I WAS GOING TO DO THAT, I'D MAKE SURE I WAS ALONE.
NO ONE ELSE WOULD PAY THE PRICE.

WHY DOES ANYONE HAVE TO PAY A PRICE? WHY DO YOU?
SOME THINGS IN LIFE ARE WORTH MORE THAN YOUR LIFE.
THE SQUAD ISN'T ONE OF THEM, RICK
THE SQUAD'S ALL I GOT LEFT, EVE
YOU'LL EXCUSE ME. I'VE GOT A PRIVATE MISSION TO ATTEND TO.
10


I CAN'T BELIEVE WALLER GAVE RICK A MISSION WHEN HE'S IN THIS STATE OF MIND!
YES, I CAN. I THINK MAYBE SHE AND I SHOULD HAVE A FEW WORDS!
EVE
I WANT MY POWER BACK.
JUNE, I WISH I COULD GIVE IT BACK.
BUT I'VE GOT THE SUCCUBUS STUCK IN ME NOW AND THERE'S NO WAY OF GETTING RID OF IT
THERE'S ONE WAY THE WAY YOUR BROTHER GOT RID OF THE INCUBUS.





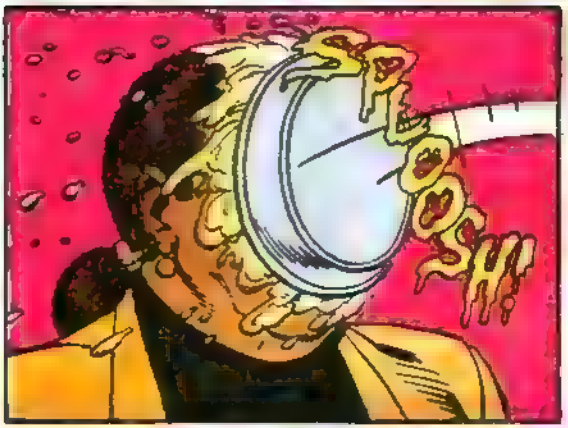

CONTINUED AFTER BONUS BOOK

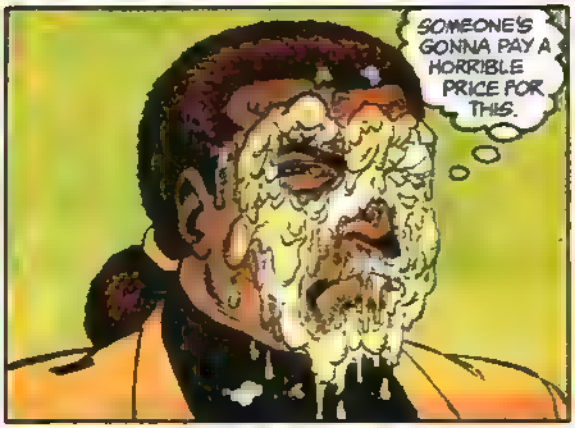
DROP IT!
WHAT?!
BLAM BLAM BLAM
SECURITY! GET THE MEDICOS HERE NOW!
I HATE THIS JOB!
13

BELLE REVE, 2:45 PM CST

GREAT! I COME BACK IN TRIUMPH FROM THAT DIPWAD TOLLIVER AND FIND MYSELF NECK HIGH IN TROUBLE AT HOME!

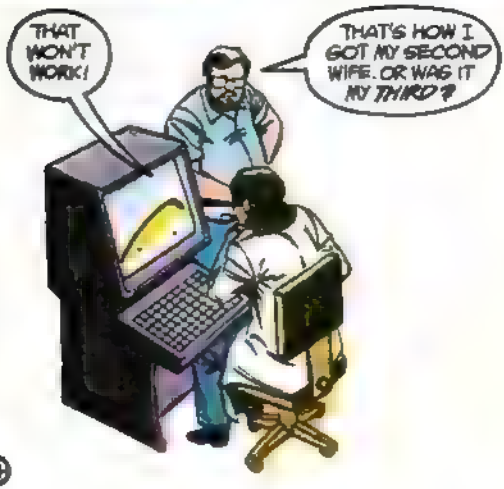
HONESTLY, THERE IS NO BREAK WITH THIS GROUP!



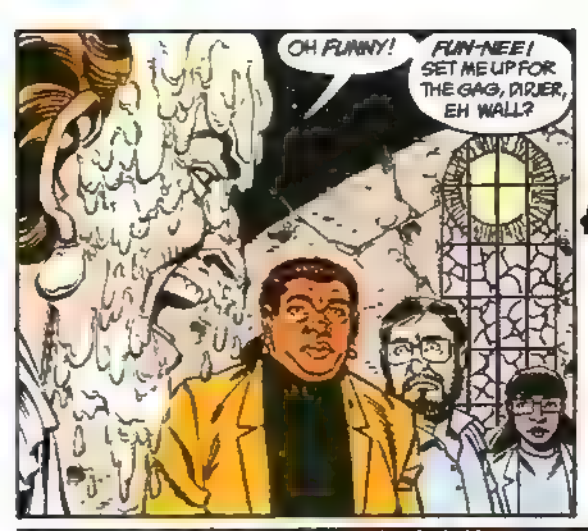




I'M JUST SAYING IT'S NOT FAIR. MARI GETS TO GO ON ALL THOSE MISSIONS WITH BEN! I DON'T HAVE A CHANCE OF COMPETING WITH HER.

DON'T. NOT ON HER LEVEL. MAKE HER COMPETE ON YOUR TURF.

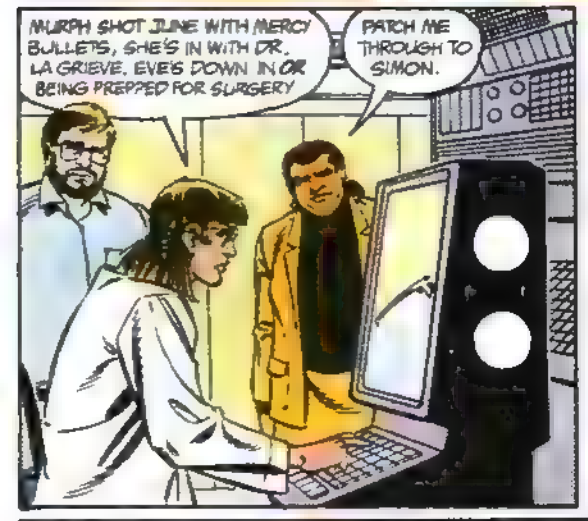


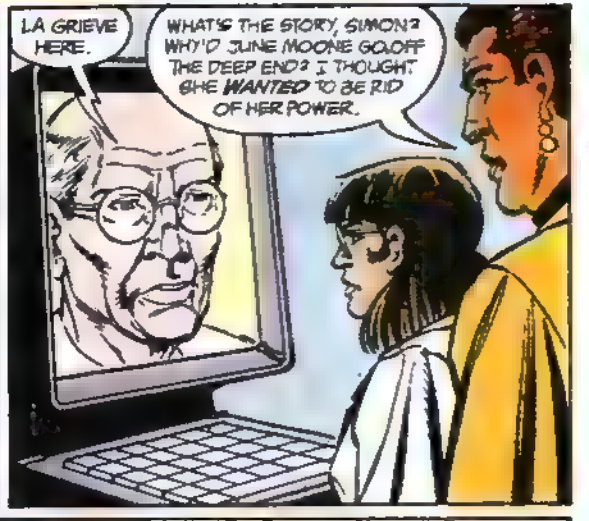
HARKNESS TO CONTROL CENTER. CAPTAIN BOOMERANG TO OPERATIONS NOW?
BOOMERANG DID THIS? HAS HE TAKEN LEAVE OF HIS TINY MIND?
HAG TO BE. I DIDN'T SEE THE PERSON WHO THREW THE PIE, BUT BOOMERBUTT'S BEEN ITCHING TO GET BACK AT ME EVER SINCE WE BUSTED HIS MIRROR-MASTER SCAM.
WHAT'S THE RUCKUS? YER MAKIN' ME MAGGOTTY, I SWEAR...
HALF A MO'.
SOMEONE OUT THERE CALL ME?
SPLOOT!

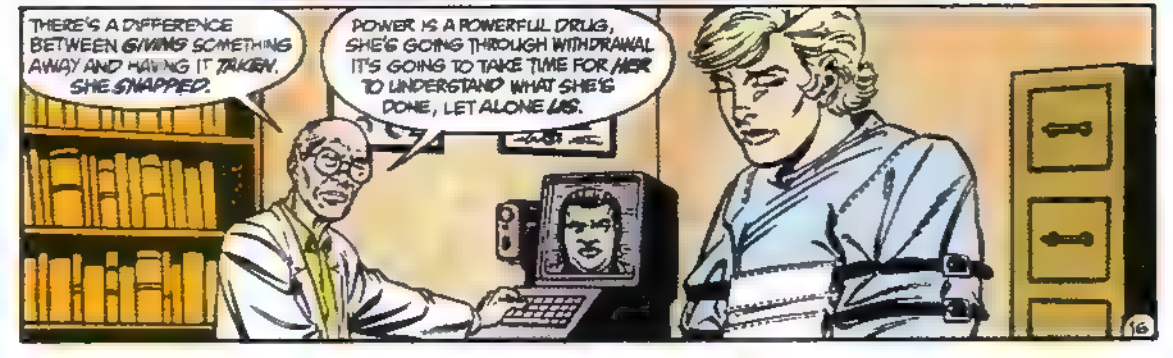

OH FUNNY!
FUN-NEE! SET ME UP FOR THE GAG, DIRIER, EH WALL?

THE HELL WITH YOU ALL! LAUGH YERSELVES SICK, YA BUNCH A'--!

OKAY, SO IT WAS SOMEONE ELSE. I'LL DEAL WITH IT LATER.
FLO, WHAT'S THE SITUATION WITH MOONE AND EDEN?


MURPH SHOT JUNE WITH MERCY BULLETS, SHE'S IN WITH DR. LA GRIEVE. EVE'S DOWN IN OR BEING PREPPED FOR SURGERY
PATCH ME THROUGH TO SIMON.

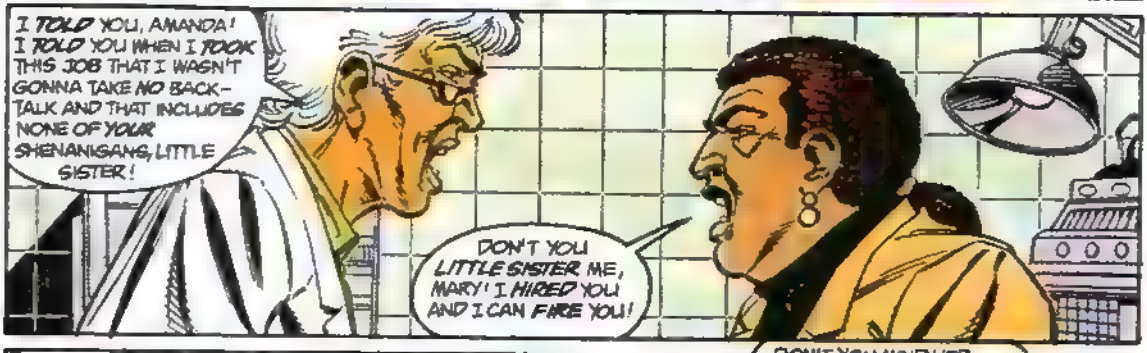

LA GRIEVE HERE.
WHAT'S THE STORY, SIMON? WHY'D JUNE MOONE GO OFF THE DEEP END? I THOUGHT SHE WANTED TO BE RID OF HER POWER.


THERE'S A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GIVING SOMETHING AWAY AND HAVING IT TAKEN. SHE SNAPPED.
POWER IS A POWERFUL DRUG, SHE'S GOING THROUGH WITHDRAWAL. IT'S GOING TO TAKE TIME FOR HER TO UNDERSTAND WHAT SHE'S DONE, LET ALONE US.

KEEP AT IT, SIMON. WE OWE HER.
FLO, PATCH ME OVER TO MEDICAL.
DR. WHITE HERE
HOW'S YOUR PATIENT, MARY?
FAIR BUT STABLE AND STUBBORN AS HELL. WON'T LET US PUT HER UNDER 'TIL SHE'S TALKED TO YOU/ SO GET YOUR BUTT ON DOWN HERE!
ON MY WAY
WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT, EVE?
TALKED TO...FLAG...SHORT WHILE AGO. HE'S IN NO...CONDITION ...TO GO ON ANY MISSION. CANCEL IT!
WHAT THE HELL MISSION ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

HE SAID HE HAD TO GO ON SOME SPECIAL GOLO MISSION... SOMETHING ABOUT SAVING THE SQUAD... AAAH!

THAT'S ENOUGH THIS GIRL IS GOING IN SURGERY NOW AND OUT LIKE A LIGHT IF I HAVE TO USE A MALLET TO DO IT!
I'M NOT DONE HERE, DOCTOR!


I TOLD YOU, AMANDA! I TOLD YOU WHEN I TOOK THIS JOB THAT I WASN'T GONNA TAKE NO BACK-TALK AND THAT INCLUDES NONE OF YOUR SHENANIGANS, LITTLE SISTER!
DON'T YOU LITTLE SISTER ME, MARY! I HIRED YOU AND I CAN FIRE YOU!

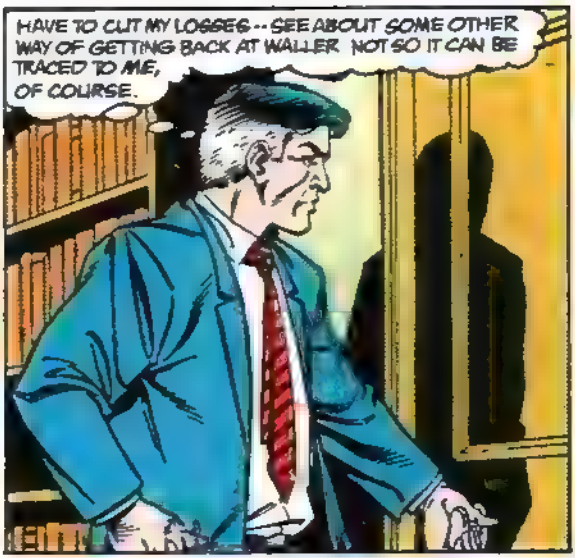
SHE'S YOUR SISTER...?!
MRS WALLER ..RICK SAID...HE HAD PRIVATE MISSION...TO SAVE SQUAD ALL I KNOW

DON'T YOU MIND HER, CHILD. YOU'RE MY PATIENT AND I WON'T HAVE NOBODY BADGERING YOU!
THIS IS THE LAST TIME I HIRE FAMILY!

FLO! LOCATE COLONEL FLAG FOR ME! ASAP!

4:02 PM CST.
MURPH SAYS HE'S NOWHERE IN THE BUILDING. CHIEF SEKOFSKY OVER AT YEAGER SAW HIM LAST
YEAH. ABOUT AN HOUR AGO. TOOK A FRIGGIN' FIGHTER OUT
ON WHOSE ORDERS?
HE DON'T NEED ANY HE'S A BIRD COLONEL; QUALIFIED FOR THE PLANE. IT'S AVAILABLE, HE GETS IT. S.O.P.*
*STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE. -- BOB
WHERE'D HE GO?
DIDN'T FILE A FLIGHT PLAN
FLO. GET THE IDENTIFICATION ON THAT PLANE. IF IT'S ON THE GROUND I WANT TO KNOW WHERE
ON IT.
I GOT A REAL BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS.
19

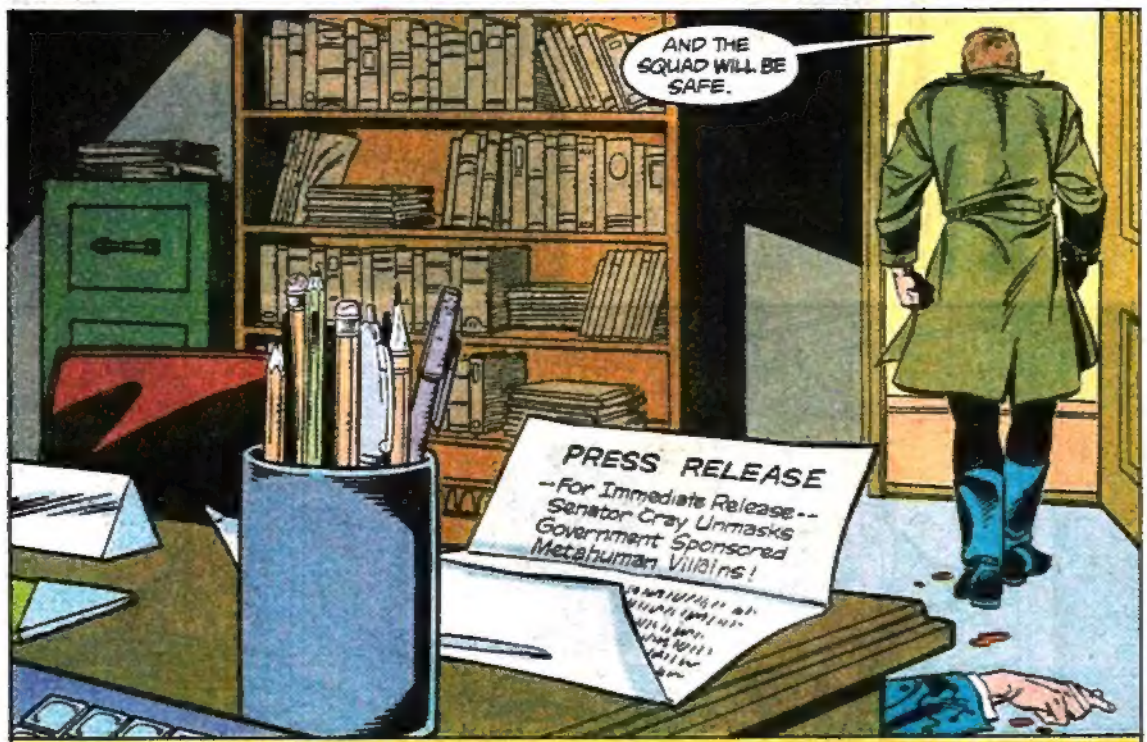
WASHINGTON D.C. -- 5:15 EST
YES, SENATOR. NO, I TALKED WITH HER TODAY. YES, EVERYTHING WILL BE FINE BY TOMORROW.
HOWEVER, I NEED TO SEE YOU. NO, NOT NOW. NO, NOT AT YOUR OFFICE. SOMEPLACE NEUTRAL.
WELL, I KNOW IT ALL SOUNDS VERY MYSTERIOUS BUT IT'S NECESSARY. IT HAS TO BE ABOUT ELEVEN P.M.
I'LL PICK YOU UP OUTSIDE THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL. WE'LL GO SOMEWHERE AND TALK. RIGHT.
IT'S IN THE BAG.
THIS WOULD ALL BE A LOT EASIER IF I THOUGHT YOU'D LISTEN TO REASON.
BUT I KNOW YOU, SENATOR, AND I KNOW THIS IS THE ONLY WAY TO MAKE SURE YOU KEEP QUIET.


HAVE TO CUT MY LOSSES -- SEE ABOUT SOME OTHER WAY OF GETTING BACK AT WALLER NOT SO IT CAN BE TRACED TO ME, OF COURSE.

JEEZ!

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING HERE?!
PROTECTING THE SQUAD

NO! WAIT! TALK TO WALLER! YOU HAVEN'T TALKED TO WALLER...!




NEXT: FLAG VS. DEADSHOT™ AND SOMEONE WILL DIE!

# SUICIDE NOTES

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L-3427

Dear Editor,

Thank you for bringing back the Jihad. Hopefully the return of the Squad's first foes will mark the return of the high quality of the early issues. The new Jihad looks promising and I hope they get a chance to return. I do have a few problems with it, however. Badb has some interesting powers but she is very unappealing visually. Agni and Rustam are too similar in face and powers. Perhaps there is an intentional connection here. At least you brought back my favorite mass-murdering terrorist, the Manticore.

In the letter column, you asked about the hero/villain ratio. I agree with Mark Lucas, there should be more emphasis on villains. The current line-up has Rick Flag, Bronze Tiger, Nightshade, Nemesis, Black Orchid, Vixen, and Shade on the hero side and Deadshot and Captain Boomerang on the villain side. Duchess (why does she have green hair?) is neutral. I think each mission team should have three heroes and the rest villains. Show us some more powerful villains such as Bolt, Shockwave, and Metallo. Perhaps the annuals could feature villains who the readers vote for.

For enemies of the Squad, I suggest Skull, H.I.V.E., the 1000, Kobra, 2000 Committee, and Tobias Whale. Is the Force of July part of Task Force X?

Steve Bedard
61 Chestnut Street
St. Catherines, Ontario
Canada

P.S. Keep Nightshade's new costume, give Bronze Tiger back his old one and give Shade a new one.

*A few very good questions, Steve. Duchess, being from Apokolips, has green hair since everyone up there is weird. The Force of July's background may be vague but we have some interesting plans for an exploration of the question, which intimately involves one of the enemies you suggest. Sorry, we have no plans to alter the costumes you suggest.*

*****

Dear John,

I just read SUICIDE SQUAD #17 and it was very good, but not quite as good as I had hoped. The return of the Jihad was most definitely a welcome one, but I had hoped for more in the way of members. But I did like the introduction. Agni has me confused—he looks very much like Rustam with a new name, or is he someone else totally?

One thing I missed this issue was my favorite character, Deadshot. I know he's off in his own mini-series but I'd like it if you could find a way to keep him here, too. And I'm wondering if there's a possibility of his getting a regular series.

Next, I enjoyed the partial crossover with Checkmate. I hope to see the other side of that conversation and the mission that The Wall asked them to do in an upcoming issue.

And the scene where Flag was talking to Captain Cold. I didn't like how Flag repeated himself. In case you hadn't noticed, he said almost the exact same thing to Enchantress in issue #5. Repeating himself takes away from his effectiveness. I also didn't like the fact that he went back on his word, something he told Amanda, that was something that he doesn't do. I somehow feel he has crossed a line that I thought he never would.

I also have to wonder how Eve plans to infiltrate the Jihad again. I mean, I'm pretty sure they know she was a traitor and although she may look different, she got to know these people and they would have to know it's her.

Donnie Matthews
Route 2 Box 209C
Ararat, VA 24053

*****

Dear Bob,

Sigh. Seems like only yesterday I was writing my first letter to SUICIDE SQUAD, after receiving a photocopy preview to read. It's well over a year later and I'm finally writing again. It seems appropriate that the issue I comment on features the return of the Jihad.

Like issue #1, we're introduced to the Jihad by seeing them in action. Little is explained, but we get to see what they're capable of and just how far their blood-hunger goes. This approach is satisfying and moves the story along without expository side-trips.

It was a foregone conclusion that when the Jihad did return, Rustam would still be in the lead. The return of the Manticore was a little bit of a surprise, although finding a new Jaculi was slightly foreseeable. What, waste a good name? The new members also caught my interest. A female version of Djinn? Also an Irish girl and Agni, whose nationality I can't quite determine. The name is Norse, the god of fire, if I remember correctly.

The person who intrigues me the most is the Thugee. This certainly seems to be Ravan, but the face looks a bit different. Didn't Ravan have graying hair? If it is Ravan, there's an explanation forthcoming, as well as one heck of a fight. The Tiger will certainly have his hands full.

Even though I haven't written, I think I should mention how much I've been enjoying the SQUAD since its inception. This and JLI are my top purchases right now. The stories thus far have been interesting and well-told; the art has not been a letdown.

Anthony R. Cardno
238 Center Drive
Mahopac, NY 10541

*****

Dear John and Luke,

I liked the return of the Jihad. Okay, so it was a bit of a cliché to replace Jaculi and Djinn with female counterparts and I have a little trouble with Ravan being fully recovered from a broken back, but I'm glad to see them back. My favorite is the little girl who can make people hate each other. I wonder which Squad member could bring himself to kill a child. Of course, Boomerang would probably be glad to do it.

And now, the obligatory list of villains and others I'd like to see: Black Hand, Atomic Skull, Katana, Calculator, Mammoth & Shimmer, Harlequin, Blackguard, the Untouchables, Crazy Quilt, Dr. Double X, Shadow Thief, Cavalier, Silver Shade, Time Commander, Houngan, Lady Quark, Dr. Phosphorous, the Icicle, the Key, and Cannon & Saber.

One thing I'd like to see in a future issue would be another Personal Files story, narrated by Father Craemer. I'd like to learn more about him, see his point of view about the Squad and its participants.

Erich Mees
3456 Spalding Drive
Dunwoody, GA 30350

*A long list with only one member*

*scheduled to make an appearance here—Cannon & Saber are due up in MANHUNTER soon while Lady Quark is expected in STARMAN around #7 or #8.*

*Yes, we like Father Craemer, too, and he will narrate his own tale sometime in the future.*

*****

Dear John, Robert, Luke, Todd, and company,

Normally, comic books that do absolutely nothing except set the stage for the next issue, peeve me. Especially comics that cost a dollar. However, as a prolonged prologue, SS #17 worked well for a couple of reasons:

1) The Jihad trashed most of Manhattan.

2) Flag started to take charge again and stopped slipping toward wimphood.

The Jihad has never been my favorite group of villains but after seeing them in action again it will be a *pleasure* to see the Squad feed them their spleens. I am particularly hoping to see Duchess go head-to-head with Jaculi.

Now that Flag is arrogant again, one of the key conflicts that originally sold me on this series, has been rekindled. The Administrator versus the team leader versus all the super-crooks who think *they* should run the show, provides the tension that ignites this book. The fact that leadership of the Squad is situational, temporary and unstable is an element you should *never* lose. The Squad has been a little too relaxed because they haven't lost any core members or featured players for a while. To keep the anxiety at the proper level for this series, leadership conflicts are essential.

By the way, I also am glad you got Nightshade out of her ice-skater's cape-less Supergirl outfit and into a *real* uniform.

T.E. Pouncey
Wichita, KS 67208

*****

Dear Squad Leaders,

Should there be more or less emphasis on super-heroes in this book?

Stick with villains mostly. Here's why:

1) They made this book unique to start with. The villains as heroes concept is the essence of this series. Other villain comics in the past failed because of lack of quality and direction, *not* because the idea is a bad one. In fact, let it die now and it'll be born again later, anyway. So get back to it.

2) The heroes you're highlighting are boring. Ride the book on them and here you'll have another lame Justice League on your hands. Equals cancellation.

3) C'mon, you've spent so much time building up strong characterization in the bad guys, particularly Deadshot and Captain Boomerang. Don't get sidetracked with costume-changes and cast rotations and "who's gonna lead?". Get to the grit.

Ish #17 was the best since #10 because we get to see bad guys being bad! We have here a story brewing about nothing but utter revenge, on both sides. Not justice. Not rescue.

Seth Ball
77 Davisville Avenue #212
Toronto, Ontario M4S 1G4
Canada

*****

Dear Bob,

I don't think it's necessary to completely wipe out all heroes from the pages of SUICIDE SQUAD, just tone it down a little. When a hero appears, just keep him there for two or three issues, then have him move on. Aside from Flag, there should be only one other hero on the Squad at a time. For the time being, it seems to be Nightshade. I really enjoyed seeing Vixen again. I didn't much care for the third incarnation of the JLA but Vixen is still one of my favorite characters. I hope she'll show up again. This book would have more appeal, though, if you took about seven villains (and maybe a hero) and put them all under Flag's control. I don't mind all the heroes *just being on* the Squad, just don't have more than one or two actively participate in each mission.

Josef Ferguson
361 Henry Clay Boulevard
Lexington, KY 40502

*****

Dear Bob,

The appeal of this book is the rough-edged, nothing-to-lose disposition of the majority of your characters involved with the Squad. They are chosen to go on "suicide" missions that other people either in their right minds or with a choice to make would certainly not go on voluntarily. Your ability to keep us, the readers, enthralled is based upon the believability of the life-threatening nature of the missions. This is accomplished by the careful "elimination" of certain characters. Occasional deaths reinforce the riskiness of the missions.

The problem? No *heroes* have died on any of the missions thus far. In order to preserve the image of this book, eventually one of the super-guys is going to have to bite the big one. I really like the book. And unlike Mark Lucas, I have nothing against involving heroes on a regular basis. And all have been well chosen thus far: Vixen, Speedy, Rick Flag, Shade. All fit the rough-edged, nothing-to-lose mold. But eventually, one of them will have to die. Just please don't make it Ben. He's one of your best characters in years!

John Q. Gerdes
PO Box 343
Collinsville, IL 62234

Dear Mr. Greenberger,

Aren't people supposed to die in this comic? It's our understanding that this title was not supposed to be another *X-Men*. These characters are disposable. They should run a real risk of death in every issue. And what about those explosive armbands? Shouldn't we be seeing some severed limbs towards the end of an issue real soon?

Don't get us wrong. We're not bloodthirsty. We just can't become very attached to these characters. Take Captain Boomerang. You've told his story. It was okay. Now kill him!

That said, we do have some constructive suggestions, most of them revolving around the title's one continuing character and true protagonist: The Wall. We want to see more of her, and we want her to be even tougher. The center of the book should be Amanda and the political machinations surrounding her. The costumed characters should come and go.

Phil Rose
Steve Rugare
No Address Given

*And those are just some of the opinions expressed by readers. We'll look at a few more next month and then discuss what John and I will do with the consensus. Honest, the opinions are helping us shape the future of this book.*

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## COMING ATTRACTIONS

In just two weeks we will present the conclusion to DEADSHOT and we think you will be very sore with yourself if you do not buy it. It's a real moving, packed tale that features some of Luke's best art in ages.

And then, in a month, Deadshot returns to the Squad just in time to go hunting after Rick Flag. Everything about the Squad is about to take a turn for the worse and death is in the air. This issue just sets the stage and next issue we get the finale. As we prepare to end our second year, things are in motion and you won't want to miss out on the fun.

Until next time, keep writing and keep smiling!

—Bob Greenberger

BEAST CHARMING
Perenially purveying a plenitude of purty, prettified pictures to my peerless pals!
HUMBLE CONTRIBUTOR TO #THECOMICRACK
Queries? Requests? Contact me at BeastCharming@yahoo.com
Pledged to scan all series great and small...